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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 000356

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BY](#)
SUBJECT: RADJABU'S UPD PARTY GAINING GROUND

REF: A. 08 BUJUMBURA 177
[1](#)B. BUJUMBURA 103

Classified By: CDA JoAnne Wagner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Despite apparent attempts by the ruling CNDD-FDD to sideline former party president Hussein Radjabu, including evicting him from the party and subsequently imprisoning him for 13 years for "threatening state security" (ref A), Post assesses that Radjabu continues to exert political influence. His party, the Union for Democracy - Trustworthy (UPD-Zigamibanga), continues to grow in popularity and Radjabu seems determined to use this influence through the UPD party to challenge President Nkurunziza and the CNDD-FDD in the 2010 elections. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

[1](#)2. (U) Hussein Radjabu fought in the bush with President Pierre Nkurunziza and Chief of Intelligence Adolphe Nshimirimana, reportedly appointing them to the roles in the CNDD-FDD that they parlayed into their current positions. In 2002, he created the UPD-Zigamibanga as a strategic alternative when, before beginning demobilization, the CNDD-FDD was still negotiating political party registration. The UPD was considered a back-up power center should negotiations fail, but when the CNDD-FDD was registered in 2003, the UPD became inactive. Radjabu, however, became the shadowy power behind Nkurunziza's throne.

[1](#)3. (U) In February 2007, the CNDD-FDD party congress ousted Radjabu, a move most observers believe was to strengthen Nkurunziza's control of the party. Police arrested Radjabu and a group of his supporters in April 2007, charging them with "threatening state security." In April 2008, Radjabu was found guilty and sentenced to 13 years imprisonment (ref A); subsequent appeals have been denied. After the trial, Radjabu's lawyer, Prosper Niyoyankana, claimed the trial did not proceed according to the rule of law, but according to the goals of the ruling party. He stated, "In this case, the judges are tools for the ruling party like a pen in the hands of a writer."

[1](#)4. (C) After his ouster from CNDD-FDD, Radjabu reactivated the UPD in early 2007. The UPD's president is Radjabu's cousin Mohamed Feruzi, but Radjabu is openly acknowledged as the party's true leader. The UPD's representative in Makamba province, Egide Ndayizeye, referred to Radjabu as the party's "advisor," informing PolOff during a June 24 meeting that "Father Radjabu" remains very active from jail.

MUSLIM SUPPORT

[1](#)5. (C) Ndayizeye also informed PolOff that despite Radjabu's Muslim faith, the UPD is not a Muslim political party, although it enjoys strong support in Burundi's small, moderate Muslim community. Nevertheless, in the past Radjabu has reportedly courted and received monetary support from donors in Islamic nations such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, the

Sudan and Iraq (ref B).

2010 ELECTION

16. (C) UPD Spokesperson Chevaneau Mugwengezo (who is both a Muslim and a Ganwa - a descendent of Burundi's royal families) told EmbOff on July 15 that the "UPD is gaining ground all over the country." Egide Ndayizeye claims people are turning from the CNDD-FDD because of the party's failure to fulfill its promises and to the UPD because the party promises development, peace and reconciliation. Ndayizeye stated that since the UPD's July 2008 start in Makamba province, the party's popularity has grown to over 80% in Nyanza-Lac and 70% in Makamba, the province's two largest cities. Nyanza-Lac is also the fourth-largest city in Burundi. Avocats Sans Frontieres' Adrien Nifasha, who claims no party affiliation, confirmed to PolOff on June 24 that the UPD is definitely active and drawing support, particularly away from the CNDD-FDD, but also stated that UPD is not yet "deep in the population."

17. (C) Ndayizeye assured PolOff that the UPD will have a presidential candidate for 2010 and that this person has been chosen within the party, but smiled secretively and refused to share a name. He said it is too early to publicize this information.

COMMENT

18. (C) Until his 2007 eviction from CNDD-FDD, Radjabu was considered Burundi's real leader, and was also reportedly behind some of the party's dirtiest deeds (corruption, assassination and terror, according to news reports). Sources indicate that Radjabu has never forgiven his former bushmates and colleagues for his expulsion and cares more that Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD falls from power than that UPD achieves any significant electoral victories for itself. There are rumors that the UPD will seek political party alliances in order to consolidate power against the CNDD-FDD for the 2010 elections. While the likelihood of such alliances remains unclear, various interlocutors fear that Radjabu is in charge of the UPD from jail and that he is willing to use whatever means necessary to achieve his political goals. Radjabu's 13-year sentence was harsher than most observers expected, leading to speculation that President Nkurunziza's administration used its influence to sideline and silence Radjabu (ref A) before the 2010 election process moves into high gear. It seems, however, that it will take more than jail to sideline Radjabu or his "back-up plan" UPD party. END COMMENT.

Wagner